

Sales of new iPad raise questions of wi-fi network capability

Following Apple's newest iPad announcement, the question of whether to allow employees to bring their own devices into the workplace is once more front of mind.

Added 4G support (although limited), the higher screen resolution and enhanced camera and video capabilities, will no doubt drive sales and with the number of smartphone and tablet users already rocketing - an estimated 99.3 million in 2012 - the real issue facing companies is not whether to, but rather how to effectively support these devices on the business network.

"While these devices are great for consumers who want to be able to communicate wherever they are, accessing their files and information on the go, it is placing existing wireless networks under considerable pressure, not least because for many the Wi-Fi connection has become the de facto choice. After all, many of these smart devices can no longer plug into traditional wired networks," said Arnaud Le hung, EMEA marketing director at Ruckus Wireless.

Headaches for service providers

Even with support for 4G on some carrier networks, he notes that since many tablet users do not have cellular contracts or connections for these devices, the real support burden will likely fall to Wi-Fi. "Whether in a coffee shop or at work, consumers today expect seamless wireless coverage and this is causing considerable headaches for businesses, hotspot providers and mobile network providers alike. Since new tablets are optimised for both entertainment consumption and corporate use, many are now taking these devices into work to act as a substitute for their PC, and demanding connectivity from their employers.

"In reality, many corporate Wi-Fi networks and hotspots are still not up to the task of supporting this influx of new devices with questions around security and integration causing concern. We estimate that by the end of the year the average business executive will own three Wi-Fi enabled devices so this is a problem that isn't going away anytime soon and that needs addressing now," Le hung concluded.